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ABSTRACT

This document describes the context in which colleges and universities prepare teachers to work with children with disabilities, presenting a vision for a system of teacher preparation conducted through partnerships between higher education and P-12 schools. It offers perspectives, ideas, and examples that may help those who are engaged in and support teacher education and who are concerned with preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities. After discussing foundations for change, the document examines opportunities and challenges for improving the education of all teachers to serve students with disabilities, focusing on five elements of renewal: renew the teacher education curriculum to establish a shared language that supports collaboration between general and special education teachers; establish collaborative clinical experiences for prospective general and special educators; ensure competence of teacher candidates to work with students with disabilities before recommending licensure; support beginning teachers during their first 3 years; and promote shared governance for teacher education that reflects the collective responsibilities of teacher educators, content specialists, and practicing teachers. For each issue discussed, the document presents the context of renewal and looks at possibilities and challenges. (SM)

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AACTE FOCUS COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

# Preparing Teachers to Work With Students With Disabilities

## *Possibilities and Challenges for Special and General Teacher Education*

A White Paper of the
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
FOCUS COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

February 2002

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## Contents

Foreword ..... 3
The Challenge ..... 3
Foundations for Change ..... 4
Opportunities and Challenges for Improving the Education of All Teachers to Serve Students With Disabilities ..... 5
- Curriculum Renewal ..... 5
- Renewal of Clinical Experiences for Prospective Teachers ..... 7
- Ensuring Competence of Teacher Candidates Before Recommending Licensure ..... 11
- Supporting Beginning Teachers During Their First Three Years ..... 12
- Shared Governance for Teacher Education ..... 14

Summary ..... 15
References ..... 16

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The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education is a national, voluntary association of colleges and universities with undergraduate or graduate programs to prepare professional educators. The Association supports programs in data gathering, equity, leadership development, networking, policy analysis, professional issues, and scholarship.

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AACTE is publishing this document to stimulate discussion, study, and experimentation among educators, policy makers, foundation officials, and others interested in special education.

## Foreword

In February 2001, the AACTE Board of Directors approved the establishment of a new focus council on special education. The board asked this group to examine and prepare recommendations for AACTE on the matter of personnel preparation in special education. Specifically, the focus council was asked to consider the related issues of special education content in the general education curriculum with attention to the impact of performance assessment and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards on this content; the structure of special educator licensure and teacher education program approval; and the influence of partnerships (P-16 and cross-campus) on the personnel preparation system.

This document not only describes the context in which colleges and universities prepare individuals to work with children with disabilities, it also presents a vision for a system of teacher preparation conducted through partnerships between higher education and P-12 schools. I would like to commend members of the focus council for developing such a thoughtful and far-reaching document. I particularly want to acknowledge the leadership of the focus council chair, Thomas Bellamy, who encouraged and guided the efforts of the group, and the work of colleagues Kozleski, Pugach, and Yinger, who were the document's primary authors. I also would like to thank Penelope M. Earley, AACTE Vice President for Governmental Relations and Issue Analysis, for working with the focus council as well as the Policymaker Partnership for providing opportunities for members of the focus council to meet with special education advocates and professionals during 2001, helping council members test their ideas and receive valuable feedback.

David G. Imig
President and CEO

## The Challenge

The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) pose a two-part challenge for colleges and universities that prepare teachers. First, the statute's emphasis on children with disabilities meeting the same content standards as other students require special education teachers to know more about the curriculum, instruction, and assessments found in general teacher education than ever before. Second, the expectation that children with disabilities will be served in regular classrooms means that general education teachers must have a command of much of the special education curriculum.

The optimal response by schools and colleges of education to the IDEA expectations would have been to quickly establish a more expansive, shared curriculum between special and general teacher education. But this approach has proven difficult, largely because different versions of teacher education reform were already under way when IDEA '97 became law. Over a decade ago, groups such as the National Network for Educational Renewal, the Holmes Group (now the Holmes Partnership), and the Renaissance Group initiated reform efforts that included (a) making major curriculum revisions to emphasize prospective teachers' content knowledge; (b) enhancing clinical experiences of prospective teachers through professional development schools and other partnerships; (c) working with schools and districts to provide induction support to new teachers; (d) ensuring the competence of teacher candidates before they are licensed to teach; and (e) involving faculty from the arts and sciences and professionals from preschool through 12th grade (P-12) schools in new teacher education governance arrangements. During this time, teacher education leaders focused on overarching reform goals and only more recently have been challenged to connect renewal efforts

among and within university departments and units.

The challenge of melding the IDEA '97 requirements with these reforms is set within a larger context of education change. Four broad expectations currently structure teacher education: All teacher education will be standards based; new teachers will be judged by the performance of their students; teachers will be asked to place an increased emphasis on academic performance; and learning to teach will occur over the life span of a career, beginning with entry into preservice preparation and continuing throughout the years of professional practice.

This document offers a set of perspectives, ideas, and examples that may be useful to those who are engaged in and support teacher education renewal and who are concerned with preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities. It is intended to be provocative and to challenge reformers to rethink how general and special education teacher preparation are coordinated and integrated. Like much that happens in education, changes in teachers' roles reflect values and assumptions about the education of children with disabilities that have become sufficiently shared to influence national, state, and local policy. The document briefly notes these underlying beliefs as part of the foundation upon which change must occur. Then, because refinements in educator recruitment and preparation occur locally and need to be understood within the context of other teacher education improvements, the report uses the five broad reforms identified above as organizers to explore new possibilities and challenges in preparing all teachers to support children with disabilities.

## Foundations for Change

Policy decisions are guided by competing expectations for schools, teachers, and the education of children with disabilities. Although there may be substantial agreement on broad goals, there rarely is consensus on how to achieve them. As a result, no policy emerges with total support, and even when a course of action appears to be set, discussions continue and policies are further refined. As this happens, the presence or lack of agreement regarding the purpose of schooling, the role of teachers, and the types of services to be available for children with disabilities becomes part of the sometimes arduous environment in which teacher education reform occurs.

Many education reforms conceived during the last two decades now are commonplace. Standards and accountability lace public discussion and policy debates at the local, state, and national levels. These conversations emphasize the success of all students, but bringing reality to the promise of ambitious learning for all requires a substantial shift in the day-to-day work of teachers. Effectively teaching all students requires new daily routines and collaboration between general educators with content expertise and special educators, whose preparation usually places greater emphasis on the learning process.

A commitment to succeed with all children requires that teachers have the knowledge and skills to serve an increasingly diverse population. Much of the attention to diversity in teacher education has emphasized ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic differences. In growing numbers, students with disabilities are present in the same classrooms where other forms of diversity predominate, and many students with disabilities may also be diverse in other ways. As students vary, so too do the strategies and supports that teachers need to meet their multifaceted needs. Most general education teachers need support and assistance from teacher specialists who are skilled in supporting the learning of students with varying abilities, and all teachers need to be sensitive to the potential interaction of students' experiences, sociocultural history, and disabilities.

For general and special educators to share responsibility for student learning requires significant shifts in teacher education

programs. Teacher candidates must conceptualize their practice and develop their pedagogy with a vision that all students, including those with disabilities, will learn to high standards in their classrooms. Since beginning teachers in both special and general education are unlikely to be experts, systematic support is needed for their continued learning, especially during the first 2 or 3 years of teaching.

Excellent teacher education—for both general and special education teachers—is a shared responsibility among education schools, colleges of liberal arts and sciences, P-12 schools, and other community organizations. Structures are needed that make this complex partnership support the preparation of all teachers.

## Opportunities and Challenges for Improving the Education of All Teachers to Serve Students With Disabilities

The dual challenge, to educate all teachers to include students with disabilities in their classrooms and to educate special education teachers to align their work more effectively with the general education curriculum, brings into practical focus the implications of the commitment to include all children in ambitious educational reforms. Unless there are teachers who can succeed with students who experience disabilities, the promise that all children can and will learn is only rhetoric. Ensuring that teachers can succeed with children with disabilities means important changes in how both general and special education teachers are educated. But for these changes to have the power to occur and persist, they must be accomplished in the context of broader teacher education renewal.

The five elements of renewal in teacher education enumerated in the first section of this paper provide a springboard for transforming teacher education programs to better prepare teachers to serve students with disabilities. These five categories may be restated in a broader manner to encompass preparation of general and special education teachers: (a) Renew the teacher education curriculum to establish a shared language that supports collaboration between general and special education teachers; (b) establish collaborative clinical experiences for general and special educators; (c) ensure competence of new teachers to work effectively with students with disabilities; (d) support the ongoing development of new teachers during their first 3 years of teaching; and (e) establish a process for shared governance of teacher education that reflects the collective responsibilities of teacher educators, content specialists, and practicing teachers. Teacher education reforms in these five areas are consistent with the spirit and vision of IDEA '97 and provide a foundation for collaboration in the education of teachers for general and special education.

### Curriculum Renewal

To establish a common responsibility for educating students with disabilities, general and special education teachers need shared understandings of academic content standards and of strategies for solving learning problems. While the demands of their roles are different, special and general education teachers must have overlapping skills and a common language to facilitate discussions of curriculum and instructional needs of individual students. Preparing teachers for these roles requires teacher educators to blend the knowledge bases of special and general education while sustaining the distinct knowledge and competencies of the two teaching fields. It is to be expected that colleges and universities will approach this goal in a variety of ways because of differences in program history, institutional structure, and state requirements for licensure.

#### The Context of Curriculum Renewal in Teacher Education

In the last decade, educators have been challenged by new and expansive accountability systems at the local, state, and national levels. The impact of requiring evidence of student performance against content standards through state and local assessment has been profound. From

discourse on how and when to measure student performance to enacting systems of accountability, all aspects of the education system have been in the policy spotlight. There is no question that accountability systems have been an impetus for increasing the rigor of teacher preparation. However, when state officials faced severe teacher shortages and were pressured to quickly fill classroom vacancies, many policy makers decided that programs for preparing teachers should be pared down to attract more candidates into the pipeline. Simultaneously, in many states, there has been more emphasis on requiring more subject matter preparation in alignment with P-12 learning standards. These conflicting pressures are not merely tensions between the quality and quantity of teachers, they are manifestations of a continuing debate about what teachers need to know and for what purposes. Responding to these ambivalent expectations complicates the work of curriculum renewal in the teacher preparation system.

**Possibilities and Challenges in Curriculum Renewal**

A shared conceptual framework across an institution's programs is one of the hallmarks of current teacher education reform efforts. Although many education schools develop such frameworks, the degree to which they represent real shared understandings and agreements between general and special teacher education varies widely. General agreements that all teachers need to be prepared to work well with students with disabilities may or may not be emblematic of a deep, common understanding of what this means in the classroom and, by extension, of internal consistency for what occurs during preservice preparation.

To achieve a common understanding and shared language, faculty responsible for general and special teacher education must first agree on what is appropriate preparation for general education teachers in terms of working with students with disabilities. Faculty will have to specifically identify the knowledge and skills they realistically expect all teachers to demonstrate when they take their first teaching positions. This means forging agreements together and reaching a common understanding about what it is that good beginning teachers do to educate students with disabilities, and, by implication, what it is that special education teachers do referenced against a common set of standards. The 2001 model standards on working with students with disabilities, prepared by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), represent the only public, national document that attempts to clarify and differentiate the roles of general and special education teachers. The document provides a useful overview of the capabilities that both general and special educators need to serve children with disabilities and is a foundation for deliberation on further refinements to the teacher education curriculum. Even if a faculty decides to adopt these standards, it must reach accord about the meaning of general and special education teachers' differentiated roles as they relate to their preservice preparation.

*Create a shared language around practices that affect students with disabilities.* Commonly used terms typically have different meanings for different faculty members and are used in different ways by them. Achieving a shared language becomes particularly important after analyzing the differences in what teacher educators mean when they use terms such as *inclusion, inclusive education, collaboration, standards-based education,* and so on in discussing how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Some teacher educators may feel comfortable if a special education teacher provides individual and small-group instruction within a general education classroom and may characterize this as collaboration; others may only see full sharing of all instruction as evidence of collaboration. Some faculty may use special education labels to talk about students in inappropriate ways ("If you have any LD kids in your class ..."), while others may explicitly correct preservice students on the use of such labeling terminology and offer alternative ways of talking about students ("If you have any

students who have a disability ...").
Teacher education faculty need to negotiate these differences to create a common understanding of what they wish to have their graduates know and be able to do upon completing the program. To know that these subtle but important differences in language exist requires that teacher educators understand enough about each other's practices in university classrooms and field work to engage in meaningful discussions.

*Reconcile teacher-directed forms of instruction with more student-centered approaches.* It is not uncommon to hear the relationship between special and general education in education schools characterized as a stereotypical fight between behaviorists and constructivists. In reality, this argument may be better characterized as a disagreement about the relative need for more and less explicit forms of instruction to meet the differential needs of students. Teacher education faculty will have to adopt a means of entering into a conversation about methodology that is squarely focused on the needs of the students, that is anchored in best practice and research, and that raises the level of expectation for students with disabilities.

General teacher education faculty will have to have honest conversations with faculty in special education about how they approach their subject areas, how they address pedagogy for students with disabilities, and the effectiveness of these methodologies. Faculty engaged in these discussions must determine where overlaps in their belief systems really exist when student learning is held as the common central concern. Most important, faculty need to consider how they talk to preservice students about content areas and why certain teaching strategies may or may not be appropriate. Once the discussion focuses on how to support students who struggle the most in learning, faculty may find that they agree more than they disagree about fundamental issues. Without engaging in this process, the opportunity to identify a common framework for methodology is not possible.

## Renewal of Clinical Experiences for Prospective Teachers

For both general and special education teachers, preservice clinical experiences provide one of the most important influences on later practice. The nature of the clinical settings, the expertise of teachers in those settings, and the responsibilities given to teacher candidates contribute significantly to the ability of special and general education teachers to share responsibility for educating children with disabilities as they move into their own practice.

### The Context of Renewal of Clinical Experiences in Teacher Education

Research has demonstrated that effective professional practice is based on situated knowledge and on contextualized action (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). Professional education in a variety of fields has long relied on extensive clinical learning experiences to develop this expertise. Teacher education is one of these fields, using clinical and field experiences as means to practice the skills and methods of teaching. Researchers (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001) have identified features of these experiences that lead to effective learning by teacher candidates:

- **Experiences with a wide range of student differences and learning challenges**. Such experiences should focus on developing effective responsive teaching strategies, especially incorporating formative evaluation and adaptive instruction.
- **Extended field experiences**. Candidates' learning experiences should be integrated with professional course work and should include guided, progressive instructional responsibilities. To allow candidates time to develop necessary management and organizational skills, many programs are turning to yearlong field experiences.
- **Candidate reflection and mentoring**. A major hurdle for teacher candidates is the integration and contextualization of

The partnership between Seminole Heights Elementary School and the University of South Florida (USF) began over 2½ years ago with the advent of the Professional Development Schools Without Walls project. At that time, USF students who were enrolled in General Education and Exceptional Student Education programs joined the educational community of our Title I school.

We now have 19 interns on our campus, three instructors, and two doctoral students. They have become active members of our staff, working with individual students, organizing service-learning projects, and receiving experiences that only the school environment can offer. This partnership offered our instructional staff renewed perspectives and innovative instructional ideas. The interns participated in school-wide activities such as our annual walk to the local high school, field trips, and school-wide curriculum projects.

As an administrator, I am delighted to see the eager faces of our future teachers greeting my diverse students each morning as they enter the school. I have a sense of fulfillment and commitment for our partnership, knowing that we have a hand in molding the future of our schools. These interns are embracing the needs of our students in their daily pedagogy with university instructors. They are learning about behavior management plans and functional behavior assessments, then entering the classroom to implement their newfound strategies and reflect on best teaching practices. They are working with professionals in the classrooms and learning effective "real life" models for teaching and problem solving.

It is my belief that these students will leave the program at the University of South Florida with a thorough understanding of professional expectations for educators and the desire to continue their career in the field of education.

*—Principal, Seminole Heights Elementary School, Florida*

teaching knowledge and skill. Candidate reflection that is inquiry driven, student centered, and carefully guided by mentor teachers is a key component of effective field experiences.

- **School-university collaboration and partnerships**. Shared responsibility for candidates' learning has proven to be a powerful strategy in teacher education. Through collaborative structures such as professional development schools, accomplished teachers provide clinical instruction and mentoring. This has created more sustained and contextualized support and induction components to field experiences.
- **Connection to career-long professional development**. Learning and professional development occur throughout teachers' careers. They begin with candidates' field experiences that are connected to and integrated with beginning-teacher induction and support systems. This integration allows teacher educators to view initial teacher preparation as more than merely groundwork for an initial license and to think more developmentally about candidates' and beginning teachers' learning experiences.

### Possibilities and Challenges in Renewal of Clinical Experiences

*Integrated partnerships for teaching and teacher education.* A number of college and university teacher education programs and school districts have formed partnerships to connect candidates' preparation with school reform and with the transformation of teaching. These partnerships have the potential to support teacher education as a career-long process. It is not uncommon, however, for multiple and unconnected school-university partnerships to exist between one institution of higher education and several schools—some for regular teacher education and others for special education. Some professional development

schools have an exclusive relationship with either a regular or a special education teacher preparation program. This situation perpetuates the regular-special education divide and precludes shared dialogue about the role of special education within its larger general education context at both the school and college levels.

When school-university partnerships and professional development schools are created, both regular and special education stakeholders must be involved. At all points in the process, including during formal contract arrangements, partnerships should include and integrate regular and special education perspectives and create an agenda of shared goals. Partnerships that connect both parties deflect the tendency to think of general and special education as occurring in segregated settings. For this reason, formal partnerships with segregated facilities serving students with disabilities are problematic. Due to regional and local variations in service provision, in certain locations there may be no opportunity for preservice students to work in integrated settings with children and youth who have significant disabilities. As a result, it may be necessary for candidates in preservice special education to work with these students in specialized, segregated settings for *limited* periods of time as they acquire needed knowledge and skills.

Given the central influence that context and experience have on educating teacher candidates, great care must be taken to select and support practice settings that reflect a shared sense of responsibility for the learning of all students, including those with disabilities. This goal can only be achieved when the setting itself provides the context for understanding what it means to include all learners and serve them well. School-university partnerships across general and special education can ensure that faculty and teachers work together to identify what constitutes high-quality clinical experiences and to model the collaboration expected of high-quality teachers.

*Collaborative mentoring and coaching of preservice teachers.* Through a variety of vehicles, teacher candidates in partnership-constructed clinical settings receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and supervision as they develop their teaching skills. These activities occur in teaching observations, coplanning and teaching with other preservice and clinical teachers, informal conversations throughout the day, and teaching seminars offered on site. Often such activities occur separately for teacher education candidates in general and special education within a single clinical setting. Yet the array of available opportunities provides multiple situations in which to model the collaborative relationships that special and general educators need to develop to learn from each other. Mentors also can model the close teamwork that is critical to support the learning needs of all students. Accordingly, preservice faculty in special and general education who work in clinical settings must model examples of reciprocal and connected practice through collaborative relationships that teacher candidates can then emulate. Joint seminars, shared supervision and mentoring, and shared professional development activities for practicing teachers are examples of activities that can be undertaken together by faculty. Achieving meaningful collaboration requires a shared mission among all teaching faculty regarding what it means to meet the needs of students with disabilities within the context of general education and the construction of preservice experiences that foster the knowledge and skills to do so.

*Expanded conceptions of curriculum and instruction in clinical settings.* Teacher candidates preparing to work effectively with students with disabilities will need to be skilled in more sophisticated methodologies because a single approach will not be appropriate in meeting individual students' needs. Future teachers must appreciate that technology has the potential to make the acquisition of more complex skills a reality for many students with disabilities and that limiting expectations for what students with disabilities can achieve is

counterproductive for special and general education teachers alike. General and special education teachers will need to draw on professional knowledge and skills to provide a range of meaningful, challenging instruction. This instruction, anchored in the general education curriculum, should draw on a range of approaches, from more teacher-directed and explicit to more student-directed and inquiry-oriented, as appropriate for students with and without disabilities. In addition, teacher candidates need to develop a variety of strategies for creating and sustaining classroom communities and for responding to inappropriate behavior in a child-centered, culturally sensitive, and reasonable manner. Prospective teachers will need to see this range modeled in clinical sites across special and general education classrooms. Future special education teachers must have opportunities to develop expertise in specific teaching and support strategies that result in successful learning outcomes for students with disabilities beyond those that are appropriate for general education teachers.

*Clinical experiences that provide opportunities to teach with a full range of students.* Developing competent practice for all students requires opportunities to learn in clinical settings where the full range of students is present, where skilled practitioners work in teams to support learning of all students, and where the experience is mediated through reflection, dialogue, inquiry, and repeated practice. Settings where only a partial range of students is present limits the skill development and the mental frameworks that are necessary for new teachers' successful practice in complex, multiability schools. From the beginning of the clinical experience, teacher candidates need to practice teaching the curriculum to students with differing abilities and needs. As a result, teacher candidates should develop a repertoire of questions about the learning abilities of their students that help them understand and predict how lessons and units of study might flow for each student in their classroom. Asking questions about the learning abilities of individual students and observing their interaction with materials and content assists teacher candidates in developing the skills of differentiated instruction.

As they receive direct practice teaching students with disabilities, preservice teachers must attend to the delicate intersections between disability and diversity in the areas of race, class, culture, gender, and language. Candidates must practice interpreting student learning, language, and/or behavior patterns from a culturally relevant perspective so they do not inappropriately label a student as having or not having a disability. Attention to how families from various cultures respond to disability and how students identify themselves in relationship to their culture and their disability must also be a component. The substantive involvement of parents in the education of a child with disabilities is an IDEA legal requirement. However, the success of all children is enhanced when there is continuity between home and school (National PTA, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). This level of practice can best be accomplished in clinical settings that provide the richest and most diverse teaching experiences with multicultural students across the full range of abilities.

*Learning to collaborate in clinical settings.* To be successful working with students with disabilities, teacher candidates need to gain knowledge and skills in working collaboratively with teachers and other education professionals as well as with families of students with disabilities and related service providers. These skills are important for all teachers, but essential to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Clinical experiences in settings where such collaboration takes place on an ongoing basis and where prospective teachers can demonstrate their skills in working collaboratively should be a fundamental part of preservice programs.

One of the fundamental reasons for this collaboration is to make the general education curriculum accessible for students with disabilities. This means that

prospective special and general education teachers alike need experience working directly in general education classrooms, in the general education curriculum, and with students who have disabilities. In addition, special education teachers require clinical experiences in creating meaningful programs of instruction for students with significant disabilities for whom achieving the explicit, assessed goals of the general education curriculum may not be the most critical learning outcome. Shared programs of professional development in the context of school-university partnerships can promote the development of healthy collaboration.

## Ensuring Competence of Teacher Candidates Before Recommending Licensure

Education schools are responsible for ensuring that their teacher candidates have the requisite skills, dispositions, competencies, and knowledge base to assume primary responsibility for teaching a group of P-12 students. When colleges and universities recommend their graduates to the state for licensure, they assert that each is qualified to teach and facilitate learning to match content standards.

### The Context of Renewal for Ensuring the Competence of Teacher Candidates

Many education schools and colleges are currently working to create performance-based assessments that are aggregated across teacher candidates. This is part of a response to public accountability demands, not only for P-12 schools but also for the value added by teacher education institutions themselves. New teachers are expected to become more and more knowledgeable and skilled in teaching diverse learners, which involves a labor-intensive process requiring strong partnerships. Yet the outcomes of intensive preparation, including a strong induction component in a partnership school, often are measured by paper-and-pencil licensure exams that may not adequately represent the quality and depth of practice required to meet basic competence expectations.

Linking teacher education accountability to pass rates on such exams contradicts the promising actions of some states and professional organizations that require the use of performance-based assessments to validate teacher candidate competence. Consequently, education schools and colleges must ensure that the conditions for skilled performance are calibrated to a set of predetermined criteria and that clinical experiences offer the opportunity to develop skilled practices that are included in the performance criteria. Strengthening the validity of the assessment process requires renegotiating relationships between clinical and university faculty and increased reliance on strong, collective agreement about what constitutes effective teaching practices. Achieving this degree of reliability requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of all faculty. Understanding the accountability context in general helps to ground discussion on the optimal way to ensure competence in teaching students with disabilities.

### Possibilities and Challenges in Ensuring Competence of Teacher Candidates

*Multidisciplinary assessment for special and general teacher candidates.* Both special and general teacher educators must collaborate in the assessment process, examining the skills needed to teach students with disabilities successfully. Together, they must review evidence of these skills and then make shared judgments about their merit against specific performance criteria. Building an assessment process that requires multidisciplinary review allows teacher educators in special and general education to construct deeper and more complex understandings of the roles of general and special education teachers. This approach leads to continued refinement of the teacher education curriculum and ensures that the assessment conditions meet the basic criteria of including students with and without disabilities.

*Coming to grips with the complexities of specialization.* Licensure requirements in most states acknowledge that different sets of skills and competencies are required to

teach students of differing age groups. Most often, teachers are licensed to teach in preschool, elementary, or secondary settings. General education licenses may also differentiate middle school, and they usually distinguish among content areas at the secondary level. Specializations may share certain pedagogical standards across the licensure areas; they also have distinct knowledge and skill sets. Teacher candidates who satisfy the performance criteria in their licensure category do so by demonstrating their teaching skills in situations that include students with and without disabilities.

The assessment of candidate performance is inextricably linked to opportunities for practice in clinical settings. For instance, it is essential to assess collaborative interactions between general and special education preservice candidates with an emphasis on evidence of effective learning by students with disabilities. This means that opportunities must be available to observe and assess these collaborative interactions. Moreover, special educators need to be able to demonstrate specialized knowledge apart from the repertoire of their general education counterparts and must demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to hold a certification or license in their field. Understanding planning for the licensure assessment means that teacher preparation programs have one more reason to select their clinical sites with careful consideration of the opportunities to work with special education students.

## Supporting Beginning Teachers During Their First Three Years

The first few years of teaching are universally recognized as so challenging that extra support at the start of a teaching career is essential both to retain persons in teaching and to improve the quality of instruction. This initial support takes many forms but typically involves mentoring from a veteran teacher. The skills for a 1st-year teacher are fragile and require a supportive environment. In times of teacher shortages, when schools are forced to hire large numbers of new teachers, they are pressed to provide the kind of mentoring that an experienced teaching force can offer. In the absence of that support, new teachers are placed in a difficult situation because they are asked to perform as veteran teachers without the support they need to succeed.

### The Context of Renewal in Support of Beginning Teachers

In recognition of the challenges faced by new teachers, many states have mandated beginning teacher induction programs. These programs require local districts to develop a support process; however, there is a vast range of approaches to implementing these mandates. Influences such as local budgets, knowledge of the professional development literature, leadership, access to resources, and local school board initiatives affect the extent to which teacher induction occurs. Debate about where the burden of support lies also impacts local and state induction programs. In some instances, education schools have responsibility for teacher induction programs. On one hand, this approach has merit in creating additional incentives for P-16 systems to work collaboratively, but on the other, it carries investment implications for both institutions and local schools, because new teachers seek jobs in a variety of locations and may not stay in the state where they graduated.

Induction programs tend to rely heavily on developing strong relationships between veteran and early-career teachers. This paradigm creates possibilities for building career roles such as mentor teachers, peer reviewers, or clinical instructors for teachers who wish to stay in the classroom but want to contribute to the continued growth and improvement of their profession.

### Possibilities and Challenges in Support of Beginning Teachers

*Who are the special education teachers with whom new general education teachers work?* Because there is a continuing and widespread shortage of highly qualified, certified special education teachers, it is likely that many 1st-year general education

teachers will serve students with disabilities working side-by-side with special education teachers who themselves are novices and who may have had little to no professional preparation. If new general education teachers are teaching in a permanent team with inexperienced, or even unlicensed, special education teachers, the two will be learning together. It might fall to the general education teacher to provide the special education teacher with methodological know-how in general education—but there may be no source of highly specific, appropriate accommodations and modifications for students who require them.

In cases where teaming and close working relationships may not exist, and where novice special education teachers carry out their work in highly segregated classrooms, new general education teachers may not have the opportunity to practice building a learning community that integrates students with disabilities. If the untrained special education teacher is not integrated into the professional teaching community at the school, he or she may not have the confidence and skill level to work toward collaborative teaching. Administrators, fellow teachers, and mentors alike need to be aware of the various combinations that may exist for the full range of beginning teachers and provide appropriate supports so that serving all students is possible.

*What skills do mentor teachers need to support beginning teachers' work with students with disabilities?* Mentoring new general education teachers is becoming a more normative practice in the schools. As schools, districts, and states work to support mentoring on an ever-increasing scale, it is critical to consider the degree to which mentors themselves can model and demonstrate best practices with students with disabilities for new general education teachers. Although we might assume that mentors of good quality will be skilled in working with students with disabilities, it may be the case that in creating criteria for mentor selection, this issue is not prominent or is rarely, if ever, discussed.

Likewise, those who develop mentoring programs must consider what guidance mentors receive in how they anticipate supporting new teachers in their work with students with disabilities. Beginning teachers do not necessarily need dual mentors from general and special education. As mentoring programs grow and become more widespread, general education mentors themselves ought to bring to their work a view of how to work with students with disabilities consistent with an inclusive view of education.

*Identifying expertise needed by a beginning teacher.* Across all aspects of teaching, developing expertise and maintaining high standards is a function of career-long professional development. Everything important cannot be learned during formal preservice preparation, and it is reasonable to expect that all teachers will hone their skills during the course of practicing their profession. For special education teachers, certain kinds of deep expertise may actually be better learned as an inservice activity. This is especially the case in low-incidence categories of significant disability with which novice teachers may have had some experience but for which ongoing professional development is needed to move from informed to expert practice. Regional institutes focusing on professional development in categories of significant disabilities can provide substantial support for new special education teachers on an ongoing basis. This approach supports the need for a time and context to develop more specialized skills, analogous to specialization residencies in the medical profession.

Initiating this sort of career development pattern requires public dialogue so that families, community members, policy makers, and teacher educators understand the necessity for ongoing, in-depth, rigorous professional development to ensure that students with disabilities are taught by highly skilled teachers throughout their educational experience. This goal carries additional challenges, such as a pay structure in most districts that does not provide extra incentives for developing

expertise. Although there are some examples of pay increases that are tied to demonstrations of expertise, in most districts, pay incentives are used to reward the accumulation of continuing education credits. In spite of these challenges, it is critical for the field to consider how to support the development of expertise in its novice teachers.

## Shared Governance for Teacher Education

Renewal of teacher education and creating the foundation for collaborative practice between special and general education teachers requires ongoing attention of higher education faculties. It is unlikely that achieving a shared language and curriculum, shared clinical experiences, adequate assessments of skills needed to serve all children, or effective supports for beginning teachers will be sustained in structures that separate and compartmentalize the work of teacher educators. The quality of general and special educators is a responsibility shared with colleagues in the arts and sciences and in P-12 schools. Without a system for sharing this responsibility, the quality of teacher education will not be fully realized.

### The Context of Renewal in Teacher Education Governance

Many of the recent innovations in teacher education have come from the recognition that teacher education is a shared endeavor that links schools and colleges of education in partnership with their colleagues in P-12 schools and districts (Holmes Group, 1990; Goodlad, 1990; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). Faculties from both arenas need to be present and active in the construction of curricula and coherent programs of study and in the ongoing assessment and renewal of teacher education programs. Therefore, the organization and governance of teacher education must also be shared.

Increasingly, there is recognition that the division of responsibilities for discipline knowledge and pedagogical knowledge—institutionalized by separating schools and colleges of liberal and sciences and education—is problematic. Faculty in the arts and sciences can provide powerful models for the way that disciplined knowledge is taught and extended. The engagement of faculty from arts and sciences and other colleges is an essential component of renewing the process of teacher education. Proposals for university centers that focus on pedagogy have great promise in bringing together the education, sciences, social sciences, and liberal arts faculties to explore the development of teachers throughout their educational experiences (Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999).

### Possibilities and Challenges in Teacher Education Governance

*Creating contexts for ongoing discussions.* Schools, colleges, and departments of education are seldom organized to foster ongoing interdisciplinary discussion. The development of a shared conceptual framework, for example, may represent one interdisciplinary activity, but unless norms of frequently repeated, ongoing interaction are created, sustaining the dialogue across faculty members will be difficult indeed. To reach agreements regarding the relative role of special and general education teachers, faculty must come to terms with how they talk about students with disabilities and the services they require. Reaching a higher level of mutual understanding about the role of different methodological concepts and practices takes ongoing discussion and dialogue. Colleges and universities may take radical steps and collapse departments that serve general and special education, or they may create new, unique, interdisciplinary structures that enable dialogue to take place on a regular basis. What is probably not possible—and may even be counterproductive—is to set an expectation that all faculty members in general education should have deep expertise in special education. Discussions of governance and its relationship to the curriculum should create new and higher levels of understanding across teacher educators, and they should also enhance what all teacher

educators understand about meeting the needs of a wide range of students.

*Including special education in new governance structures.* Collaborative renewal requires proximity, ongoing discourse, and joint practice. Unless new organizational structures are created to bring together faculties in special and general education, the departmental structures of most education schools will stifle collaboration. These new structures should include partners from the P-12 schools where teacher candidates work. As an example, teacher education councils can be an effective vehicle to bring K-16 faculty together on a regular basis for discussions and decisions about effective construction of learning environments for teacher candidates in special and general education.

Councils or their counterparts meet regularly and frequently throughout the academic year. Their decisions represent the institution's policy guidelines for recruiting, admitting, supporting, educating, and graduating teacher candidates. Sustainable structures are built by identifying entities should have a voice in any decision making about the curriculum for general and special education teacher preparation. Then the partners ensure that individuals who represent each party are able and committed to being present and that they take an active role in bringing their perspective to the decision-making process. In special education, teacher education is a shared responsibility not only of higher education and P-12 faculty but also of families of students with disabilities and people with disabilities. As a result, teacher education councils might consist of faculty—P-12 and higher education, across liberal arts and sciences and special and general education—and family members who represent the experience of students with disabilities, or students with disabilities themselves.

One way to think about a shared decision-making and governance agenda is to conceptualize this work as strategic entanglement for the improvement of teacher education. Hence, a governance structure like a council is one of several avenues to ensure the perspectives of multiple participants are included into teacher education decision making. An ongoing responsibility of such a group might be the local analysis of obstructions to improvement and the resulting, jointly developed strategic plan to resolve them.

*Ensuring the continued integrity and development of specialized knowledge and expertise.* To serve all children, structures are needed to support ongoing discussion and collaborative decision making about the education of general and special education teachers At the same time, supports are important to sustain the unique knowledge that each of the many education specializations contributes to the cooperative effort. Both special and general education encompass many areas of specialization that require ongoing research and program development to solve the learning problems that children experience in their schools. Consequently, governance structures are needed that both increase collaboration among teacher educators in special and general education and support the continued development and transmission of specialty knowledge in both arenas. Only when the responsibility for preparing all teachers is shared will new educators be well prepared to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in every classroom.

## Summary

Discussions about both teacher education and the education of students with disabilities are typically punctuated with passion. We all want schools where every student meets challenging standards for learning. And, as we see barriers to this ideal that affect particular students or subjects, we develop strong commitments to various teacher education approaches that could improve current practice.

A dual challenge to schools of education is imbedded in the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: to ensure that special education teachers know more about the standards,

curriculum, and assessments of general education than before, and to ensure that general education teachers know more than before about serving children with disabilities in their classrooms. Responding to this expectation provides teacher educators the opportunity to act on their passion for improving schools and teaching for all children, and it also presents challenges that must be confronted in educating both special and general education teachers.

Complicating the response to these possibilities and challenges are the many ongoing efforts to renew and reform teacher education, reflecting both the efforts of the profession and the intervention of state and federal policy makers. The context for responding to the possibilities and challenges associated with educating children with disabilities is framed by ongoing reforms in schools of education related to the teacher education curriculum, clinical experiences, methods of ensuring teacher candidate competence, induction for new teachers, and governance of teacher education.

The specifics of the policy mandates affecting general and special teacher education will continue to change and evolve, creating new dimensions to the challenges facing schools of education. What is likely to continue is the increasing public commitment that schools and teachers will help students meet high standards for learning and that this will explicitly include all children with disabilities. This commitment will continue to challenge both general and special education faculties in schools of education to work across traditional departmental and disciplinary boundaries, develop more comprehensive and coherent partnerships with P-12 schools, negotiate new curricular frameworks, and find governance structures that support ongoing conversations about priorities and approaches in teacher education.

The possibilities in the evolving strategies for educating general and special education teachers are as great as the challenges. The passion for children's learning that is so pervasive in schools of education will provide the energy and direction for needed changes.

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